Indian Graphic Novels: City, History and Representation.

Final Synopsis

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Introduction

Various artistic mediums, such as cave painting/rock art in the past and sculpture and paintings in the present, have contributed to the development of the graphic novel. Through their image paintings, artists from all walks of life give meaning to their surroundings as well as convey their opinions or ideas through depictions of the wildlife, their cultures, the natural world, and the local populace. It was a specific kind of storytelling. Artists portrayed the mythical tales of the Mahabharata & Ramayana in their works of art while Muslim emperors ruled India. It was a very important part of how the epics, myths, as well as legends were popularized in a distinctive way ("The Comics Code"). Graphic novels are subject to some prejudices. The majority of the people believe that graphic narration is a juvenile, subpar form of art, especially for young audiences. It isn't serious enough and is unable to portray delicate subjects. The world of comic books has recently made significant contributions to the growth of this genre.

The earliest types of graphic story narration are considered to be woodcut novels, which were first published in late 1910. These books, also known as woodcut novels or novels in pictures, had an effect similar to that of silent movies with their titles removed because they did not present character themes or plots in sentences and paragraphs. With his leftist works, Frans Masereel (1889-1972), a prolific artist, helped pave the way for woodcut novels. His writings addressed urban degradation and class dramas. The woodcut novels attracted artists from the United States, Canada, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Germany after gaining the reputation of being an international enterprise Lund Will (1905–1985) is viewed as the father of the graphic novel. God's Men, his 1929 piece, did quite well in sales. The cartoonist Milt Gross's (1895–1953) He Done Her Wrong (1930), in contrast to its predecessors, was a dystopian novel. Comix 2000, 324 wordless comics by 29 different artists are included this book was published in 2000 by the French publisher L'Association (MacInnes .).

Publishers and artists forced these superheroes to battle the forces of the ally during the Second World War. Captain America (1941)'s first issue's cover showed the hero delivering a roundhouse blow to Hitler's chin. After the Second World War, comic book fans gathered in various hotels and introduced the inspiring idea of fandom. There, they talked about it and bought comic books. The Great Comic Book Heroes by Jules Feiffer, published in 1965, is an illustration of this genre. At that time, comic book shops began to proliferate all over the United States of America as the popularity of comics grew. New businesses like Warp Graphics & Fanta Graphic sprung up to satisfy the market's growing demand (Hatfield and Beaty).

In 1976, Richard Corben's Blood Stars, the first graphic novel, was published. It is inspired by a short story by Robert Howard, who invented Conan, the barbarian hero of the sorcery & sword genre. With the release of Art Spigelman's Maus: A Survivors Tale (1986) by Pantheon Books, this genre of literature rose to prominence in the latter half of the twentieth century. The prestigious Pulitzer Prize was awarded for this work in 1992. Later, Alan More's Watchmen (1987) and Frank Miller's Batman: The Dark Knight Returns (1986) (both with illustrations by Miller & Klaus Janson) were published (Perry, 2018). The sales of graphic novels grew as a result of these novels. Several novels have also been turned into movies. "Batman (1989), Captain America (1990), Batman Returns (1992), Batman and Robin (1997), Blade (1998), Spider-Man (2002)", and others come to mind. In 2002, a Symposium on this topic was even organized by the American Library Association. The lecture was given by graphic novelist Arts Spiegeleman in front of that audience.

Thesis statement

The research on graphic novels has so far focused on topics like violence, sexuality, historical wounds, and the city, but there are still other aspects of this genre that have not been fully examined. This research will attempt to explore how Indian literature is changing and growing

in the complex postmodern environment. Readers should benefit from novelists' general experiments with new approaches and methods and alignment with global currents or changes. The use of various representational motifs in graphic novels will be emphasized. A review of a few select novels is extremely important given all of this.

Objectives

Indian graphic novels are widely published and have successfully carved out a market segment among urban consumers. The discipline needed to support the research would be to recognize and comprehend the representation of the cities and people within the text and social contexts with an unbiased understanding. The investigation of this thesis's problem statement would involve developing an interdisciplinary approach. Different graphic novels today depict cities and their inhabitants differently. Amarchitrakhatha, which has the reputation for decades of building a certain sense of middle-class morality, has been challenged by the liberalization of art itself.

The Indian subcontinent is represented in novels by authors like Sarnath Banerjee, Vishwajyoti Gosh and others in a variety of political and historical cities. It may be the persistent images from earlier decades or those of the current urban population; These pictures are realistic through society's familiarity with them. The images' combination of humour and satire creates a poetic rhetoric of nostalgia. The purpose of this research is to locate the images that depict how cities are portrayed in the context of political, social, and cultural discourse. Examine the role that written and visual metalanguages play in the construction of meaning.

In the field of literary and cultural studies, the study would be qualitative and empirical. To comprehend the concepts of the city and the author's memory of the city as it is depicted in them, the research would use the medium of graphic novels. The research's scope also covers

how the city is portrayed in Indian graphic novels. Such an investigation would involve cross-disciplinary research, primarily from the social sciences and the humanities.

- The primary method of indulgence in this study would be textual analysis. Opening newer interpretive vistas would result from comprehending the text through textual analysis. The study of semiotics is crucial to comprehending textual analysis techniques.
- The study will use visual hermeneutics to understand the interpretation of the visual text and to ascertain the meanings of such pictures in the context of the research issue.
- A detailed discourse analysis would be the study's focus. Research methods would resemble those applied in the discipline of cultural criticism. Cultural studies draw heavily on the understanding of cultural criticism.

Research methods are being used in the current context to argue my insights on the themes of the city and the graphic novels to comprehend the graphic novel in the English studies context.

Justification for the Doctoral Dissertation

Graphic novels, their characters, and their formats have left a lasting cultural impression on India and have an impact on cultural dynamics and communication. Since the second half of the 20th century, comics have been recognized as one of the key pictorial components of popular culture. Thus, it becomes clear how important comic books are to understanding the mythology of contemporary mass culture and its self-perception. In the context of media studies, literary, cultural, or graphic arts, there is still no academic discipline known as "graphic novel studies," despite the substantial output of academic books on graphic novels ("excluding perhaps a few online courses"). The gap between high and popular culture is obvious since it had long ago bridged. Disciplines of contemporary art and media, such as photography, film, and television series, have become widely accepted and are now the focus of scholarly inquiry.

However, despite being more than a century old, academicians still have little interest in comic books. Anyone choosing to treat comics seriously must therefore legitimize the genre. To combat the still-presented condescending evaluation of comics' artistic merits or their status as collective mass media, legitimization is required. Above all, there are two key reasons why comics are still largely ignored in academia: First, there is a general lack of knowledge about the wide range of subjects and topics that comic books cover, which is consistent with the notion that comics are only for semi-alphabetized adults & kids. As comics are a peculiar hybrid that blends images and words in spatial order, the second component may be linked to the distinctive qualities of this media. Due to the combination of two traditionally very differently coded media, comics initially seem to be straightforward and understandable. The blending of images, words, and sequences represents an abrupt nature. As a result, comic book techniques are applied to graphics for instructions, warnings, or advertisements. However, if a critic or researcher wants to examine comics more closely and analyse them, and how this combination of codes interacts with one another, they may run into problems because they lack the comprehensive descriptive and analytical tools that are required. Such a device would have to include theories and knowledge about the study of literature & visual arts. As a result, upon closer examination, comics are perplexing to both linear text readers as well as to reflective viewers of paintings and photographs. From a formal and historical standpoint, camera positions used in filmmaking can be used to describe the comic book perspectives used in the images or frames (referred to as "panels"), such as "zoom," "sequence shot," "pan shot," or "jump cut." Comics continue to be a purely spatial medium, in stark contrast to film. Panels, comic strips, and pages are some examples of their static components. Mise en scene is referred to as the organization of narrative space and layout of the comic book page. This differs from editing (montage), which denotes the transition from one scene to the next and so denotes the passage of time. Montage is only used in filmmaking and serves only a metaphorical purpose

in comic books. The "gutters" between the pictures, which are white borders that are both temporally and spatially ambiguous, are of particular interest in this context because they are abundantly breached in both contemporary and very old comics, such as those by Winsor McCay. In conclusion, the "Gutenberg galaxy of books" unquestionably includes comic books (Ahrens and Meteling).

While the gaze constantly shifts between quick cursory reading and viewing of images, the reader still has to flip through the medium and read it. There is unquestionably a connection between the comic book medium and the modern metropolis. This highlights the need to understand the specific ways in which urban topography, self-portraits, cultural memory techniques, and other readings of the city (such as walking, advertisements, architecture, mystery stories, mass occurrences, street culture, etc.) are integrated into the graphic novels, on the other hand. Due to the hybrid nature of comics, which combine words, images, and sequences, it is necessary to ascertain whether they are particularly adept at aesthetically capturing urban space and city life. A certain level of self-reflection is used in graphic novels. They not only reflect many aspects of modern living but also adopt its formal aesthetics and cultural tenets as a real portrayal of urban modernity. Today too, the world's main cities have been included in comics, including New York City numerous times as well as Berlin, Paris, London, and Tokyo. This shows how crucial comics are to contemporary culture because they have a long-lasting impact on how people perceive various social, political, and cultural trends as well as having a significant impact on the "mythologies" that Roland Barthes referred to (Watts). The core idea of this thesis is the intimate connection between comics and cities, which serve as the 20th century's focal point for modern culture and daily life. The cityscape itself, for instance, as combinations of words and images in the form of signage and graffiti, which are profoundly influenced by the aesthetics of comics, demonstrates comics' proficiency in capturing urban space and city life. focusing on graphic novels and the city while covering a

wide range of topics, viewpoints, and interests. Authors like Sarnath Banerjee and Vishwajyoti Gosh have developed this sort of bond with the individuals that populate their graphic novels as well as Indian cities in the setting graphic novels in India. Additionally, several graphic novel anthologies have appeared in the Indian markets, depicting a similar symbiosis (Petersen).

Readers are shown the qualities of the average person as they are portrayed in graphic novels. This increases the relatability of graphic novels. The depiction of ordinary people's daily affairs is conveyed with the use of visual representation, even though the graphic novel is in some ways considered mainstream literature. Underground comics are perceived as being more conventional and intelligent than mainstream comics due to their political, religious, sexual, and social norms commentary. Although the art is frequently cruder and more metaphorical, the content itself speaks to readers' suppressed urges and hidden consciousness. Reading through a few comic books or graphic novels will highlight the contents' most blatantly honest and direct depictions of society. The graphic novels, according to Paul Ling's analysis of themes, deal with "immediate gratification of the instincts" and "sublimations of sexuality—romantic love, tenderness, and altruism—are, on the whole, lacking." (Saraceni).

Creating compelling depictions of everything from superheroes to regular people to various types of imagery that can be found in and around us. Graphic novels have imagined cities and their representation in a variety of settings, including both the real world and the fantastical (Saraceni). This understanding of comic books and graphic novels makes it a good topic for research because it will help people understand graphic novels from newer perspectives and sensibilities.

Review of Literature

Comics in India previously considered as cheap and unappreciated took a new shift with the advent of Amarchitra Katha series of comics in 1967. It gained popularity as an educational medium and a value-building exercise among young readers through its mythical and moral stories narrated in comic form. The Indian graphic novels follow their western counterpart and have hardly changed in fifty years. It is the modern Indian graphic novels which are radically transformed the comics as a medium and made it a contemporary literature form of the 21st CE. Significant general literary giants like Hachette, Harper Collins, and Penguin have published them, as have smaller picture-book companies like Tara Books and the political press Navayana, as well as comics-only specialists like Blaft, Phantomville, and Manta Ray. (Nayar, "Editor's Introduction: Gender and the Graphic")

Another trend in the production of graphic novels has been the anthologies displaying a wide range of emerging and established authors. Anthologies such as Obliterary Journal, Pao, Dogs, and twelve have set a new trend in the readership of graphic novels in India. This Side That Side: Restorying Partition brings together forty-eight authors and artists from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India, this book addresses the consequences of partition and the division of former British India to the current topography of the country. Drawing the Line: Indian women fight back by Zubaan publishers is an anthology with short autobiographical comics by established artists and newcomers. This anthology tackles the issues of sexism, rape voyeurism, and women's rights and identities (Nayar, "Editor's Introduction: Gender and the Graphic"). Graphic novels as a platform have given more women writers and artists to express their issues and bring in new dimensions and themes in their work.

The major indicators of culture change are multimedia fan conventions called Comic Con, again a concept borrowed from the west. Comic-Con is the convention where readers can meet

their favorite authors and artist and interact with them. Conventions like these held in major Indian cities; throughout the year connect the readers with the producers of graphic novels, which harnesses a relationship between the readers and the authors. With the huge population of India and considering that two-thirds of the population is under the age of thirty-five there is a great potential for graphic novels to flourish. With the advent of digital mediums like phones, tablets, and other devices, access to graphic novels is easy (Nayar, “Editor’s Introduction: Gender and the Graphic”). Graphic novels made in India are not mere novelties, nor is it a fad. Graphic novels in India have established themselves as a medium of literature, it is here to stay and grow in dynamism and diversity.

Graphic novels in India have evolved into subgenres and forms. One such theme constantly visible is a socio-political concern and a desire to address issues unreported in conventional literary forms. In his graphic novel Delhi Calm, Vishwajyoti Ghosh tries to understand the "Emergency' era of 1975-1977, when civilian rights were withheld across India. Delhi Calm is part history lesson trying to capture the mood of Delhi through the Emergency era (Fraser).

The idea of 'City' in graphic novels plays an important role in understanding the critical and creative imagination of the artists. As already established graphic novels are a product of the cities. The reader and the producers of the Graphic novels belong to the cities. Thus, the representation of the 'City's' imagination is that of the city dwellers and the author's experiences of the cities are depicted through these graphic novels (Nayar, “The Human Rights Graphic Novel”). The Indian graphic novelist varies in form, be it in the story or the theme structures. The graphic novels vary from political satire to biographical; some of the graphic novels tell stories of cities while some of the rural life. A bunch of graphic novels represent coming-of-age stories, whereas a few more capture histories of the Indian cities and their sensibilities. Sarnath Banerjee's books exhibit the features of a political satire of the current governance and its city-dwelling people. His story plots are built around the characters of commoner Indians

like the urban flâneurs, psychic plumbers, and government bureaucrats, whose meritocracy reflects the architected buildings that have shaped India without blueprints. He records the transformation of nostalgic Delhi's historic Hauz Khas village, studded with ancient tombs and mosques, into a wealthy residential area. He also reflects on the idea of "global Brooklynification" felt from Bombay to Berlin, and cynically projects the futile coming of age of the new India (Nayar, “The Human Rights Graphic Novel”).

Urban India is a common set of these graphic novels. The contemporary city has fragmented realities and Sarnath Banerjee explores hidden lives and loves in Corridor through a Delhi shopkeeper, and in Kari by Amruta Patil through a lesbian and her experiences and understanding of Mumbai as a 'smog city'. In contrast, the sweeping and kaleidoscopic Hyderabad by Jai Undurti and Harsho Mohan Chattoraj daringly spans four centuries, weaving together histories and fables that co-exist in this present-day IT hub 'born as fire in the poet's mind'. There is a long list of graphic novels which have represented the Indian city as the background to their stories.

Choice of Primary Text

While the gaze constantly shifts between quick cursory reading and viewing of images, the reader still has to flip through the medium and read it. There is unquestionably a connection between the comic book medium and the modern metropolis. This highlights the need to understand the specific ways in which urban topography, self-portraits, cultural memory techniques, and other readings of the city (such as walking, advertisements, architecture, mystery stories, mass occurrences, street culture, etc.) are integrated into the graphic novels, on the other hand. Due to the hybrid nature of comics, which combine words, images, and sequences, it is necessary to ascertain whether they are particularly adept at aesthetically capturing urban space and city life. A certain level of self-reflection is used in graphic novels.

They not only reflect many aspects of modern living but also adopt its formal aesthetics and cultural tenets as a real portrayal of urban modernity. Today too, the world's main cities have been included in comics, including New York City numerous times as well as Berlin, Paris, London, and Tokyo. This shows how crucial comics are to contemporary culture because they have a long-lasting impact on how people perceive various social, political, and cultural trends as well as having a significant impact on the "mythologies" that Roland Barthes referred to (Watts). The core idea of this thesis is the intimate connection between comics and cities, which serve as the 20th century's focal point for modern culture and daily life. The cityscape itself, for instance, as combinations of words and images in the form of signage and graffiti, which are profoundly influenced by the aesthetics of comics, demonstrates comics' proficiency in capturing urban space and city life. focusing on graphic novels and the city while covering a wide range of topics, viewpoints, and interests. Authors like Sarnath Banerjee and Vishwajyoti Gosh have developed this sort of bond with the individuals that populate their graphic novels as well as Indian cities in the setting graphic novels in India. Additionally, several graphic novel anthologies have appeared in the Indian markets, depicting a similar symbiosis (Petersen). Hence the graphic novels like *Harappa Files and, The Barn Owl's Wonderous Capers by* Sarnath Banerjee and *Delhi Calm* by Vishwajyoti Gosh are selected to pursue this research.

Details of Chapter Division

Chapter 1: Discusses the Indian graphic novels & city and graphic novels general perspective in this thesis. Similar to movies, graphic novels portray nonstop action sequences using various artistic devices such a mise-en-scène, panels, bubbles, gutters, and the usage of frames. The form and stylistics of Indian graphic novels were examined and analyzed in Chapter 1. Different authors and graphic book artists use various styles in their novels. There are no common writing styles among the authors. The methods and ways in

which they create meaning within the constraints of their use in graphic novels were also examined in this chapter 1. Understanding the texts requires the use of these stylistic devices and literary devices. Along with the words and the images, the use of these approaches helps the content make sense. In such a short amount of time, the graphic novel has developed and grown to incorporate such a large body of material. This chapter contains a discussion of the history of the graphic novel. The second section contains a brief explanation of Indian graphic novels, the third section explains the city and graphic novels and the people and city in those novels, the fourth section discussed the justification for the research, and the fifth and sixth sections contain the research methodology and structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2: "The Harappa Files" by Sarnath Banerjee discusses how the urban Indian condition has been transformed into a museum-like spectacle for outsiders to observe and consume. The author examines how this process of "museumization" serves to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and reinforce a one-dimensional portrayal of Indian culture.

"The Harappa Files" is a graphic novel by Sarnath Banerjee that was published in 2006. It is set in the ancient city of Harappa, which was a major centre of civilization in the Indus Valley during the Bronze Age. The story follows the lives of several characters who are struggling to come to terms with the rapid changes that are taking place in their city as it becomes more industrialized and connected to the outside world. The novel explores themes of identity, cultural change, and the impact of globalization on traditional ways of life. The tendency for alternate histories in graphic novels is seen from the storytelling approach taken by the majority of Authors. Understanding the development history of graphic novels was the covered in this Chapter 2. In contrast to the widespread perception of history utilized politically and culturally, the chapter criticized the development of diachronic history.

Chapter 3: *Delhi Calm* by Vishwajyoti Ghosh explores the theme of censorship, precarity, and ideology during the emergency years in India (1975-77). The chapter discusses how these issues impacted the social and political climate of the time and how they continue to influence contemporary society.

Vishwajyoti Ghosh's Delhi Calm is a graphic novel that explores the events of the Emergency years (1975-77) in India, a time when civil liberties were suspended and the government was ruled by authoritarian means. The novel is set in Delhi, and it follows the lives of ordinary people who are caught up in the political turmoil of the time. The graphic novel is known for its portrayal of censorship, precarity, and ideology during the Emergency years. It is widely regarded as an important work of political commentary, and it has received critical acclaim for its portrayal of the political events of the time. The concept of the "City" as it appears in graphic novels was discussed in chapter 3. The chapter also discussed how the concept of the "City" was seen in graphic novels as opposed to other types of literature. As shown in the graphic books, parallels between the urban & rural worlds would also be made. The knowledge of the many socioeconomic groups and layers that make up the "City" and its varied histories was also covered in this chapter.

Chapter 4: of "The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers" by Sarnath Banerjee discusses the influence of colonialism on the development of Calcutta, India. Banerjee explores how Calcutta became a cosmopolitan city, shaped by the British colonizers and the various cultures they brought with them. He also delves into the ways in which colonialism affected the local population, including the impact on their economy, social structure, and cultural identity. The chapter highlights the complex interplay between colonialism and cosmopolitanism in the formation of Calcutta as a modern city.

Sarnath Banerjee's The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers is a graphic novel set in Calcutta, India that explores the city's history and its relationship with colonialism and

cosmopolitanism. The story follows the lives of several characters who are connected to the city in different ways and whose experiences are shaped by the forces of colonialism and cosmopolitanism. Calcutta, which was known as the "cultural capital" of India during the colonial period, was a site of intense cultural exchange between the British colonizers and the local Indian population. This cultural exchange was facilitated by the city's cosmopolitan character, which was shaped by the diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities that lived there.

The graphic novel portrays Calcutta as a city that is both shaped by colonialism and resistant to it. On the one hand, the city is depicted as being transformed by the influence of the British colonizers, who brought with them their own cultural practices and values. On the other hand, the novel also portrays Calcutta as a city that is able to resist and transcend colonialism through its rich cultural diversity and the resilience of its inhabitants. Overall, The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers is a thought-provoking exploration of the complex relationship between colonialism, cosmopolitanism, and the making of a city like Calcutta. Cities in graphic novels also serve as representations of the local populace and culture. Understanding the characters and their way of life as they are portrayed in the graphic novels are covered in chapter 4. This chapter also discussed how these alternative sexualities are portrayed and place them in the context of culture and politics. Chapter 4 also examined the format of graphic novels and its distinctive use of both text and graphics. Utilizing combination of text and images, comprehend the idea of meaning creation. Examined the demographics, history, and relationship between the readers and the authors of such literature. Analysed the history of the authors who created these works of literature and related it to the representation used in the graphic novels. Chapter 4 examines the urban subcultures depicted in the graphic novels.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Indian graphic novelists have represented cities and their cultures and subcultures in their work. With the understanding of people and the 'City', the subcultures that reign in the cities also become important. The people of the cities are identified by the subcultures they subscribe to for a certain identity of their own. Be it the IT population, the government babus, the politicians, the hipsters, or the representation of the youth, different people belong to different subcultures of the cities. This chapter briefly discusses the overall summary and conclusion of the thesis.

Conclusion

The format and stylistics of Indian graphic novels will be discussed and analyzed in this chapter. Similar to movies, graphic novels portray nonstop action sequences using various artistic devices such a mise-en-scène, panels, bubbles, gutters, and the usage of frames. Understanding the texts requires the use of these stylistic devices and literary devices. Along with the words and the images, the use of these approaches helps the content make sense. In such a short amount of time, the graphic novel has developed and grown to incorporate such a large body of material. This chapter contains a discussion of the history of the graphic novel. The second section contains a brief explanation of Indian graphic novels, the third section explains the city and graphic novels and the people and city in those novels, the fourth section discussed the justification for the research, and the fifth and sixth sections contain the research methodology and structure of the thesis.

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